

# LOOK OUT! Mr. Gondorf is at Large Again

No Master Criminal of the Detective Novels  
or the Movies Ever Performed More Spectacular  
Exploits Than This Engaging Dress-Suit

Swindler of Millions  
Who Has Just  
Walked Out of  
Sing Sing Prison

Out of Sing Sing  
Prison Walked  
Charles Gondorf  
the Other Day.  
From His Lair at  
the Waldorf-  
Astoria and Other  
Big New York  
Hotels Gondorf,  
Like a Wolf in  
Sheep's Clothing,  
Had Preyed on the  
Rich and Un-  
suspecting.

At your club some evening soon it's quite possible that you may meet a man of distinguished manner, suitless dress and highly polished speech who will gracefully manage to turn the conversation to horse racing. Presently he will tell you in whispered confidence that he knows of a way to play the races and always be a sure winner. Later on he will suggest—

But don't let him waste any further breath. Just ask him to pardon you for a minute, step to the nearest telephone booth and tell Police Headquarters all about it.

Do precisely the same thing if you meet in the lobby of your hotel a retired business man who explains how a real, honest-to-goodness gold mine can be had for a mere song by advancing a few thousand dollars to a dying mining engineer.

And when you find in your mail a letter from a convict in some Spanish prison who needs only a little capital to recover a princely buried treasure turn it over to the police and let them answer it for you. The more plausible the scheme for making money easily and the more well bred, prosperous and trustworthy the man presenting it appears, the more you must beware—that is, unless you have so much money that you don't mind throwing a few thousands away.

The reason for all this caution is that Charles Gondorf, the sleekest, shrewdest, most deceptive confidence man that ever preyed upon the public, is at large again. And if his appetite for other people's money is as keen as it was before he was sent to Sing Sing he may this very minute be setting one of his cunning traps for you.

No one can safely consider himself proof against the wiles of a supercrook such as Gondorf has been for twenty years. Hundreds of business and professional men of the highest standing have fallen surprisingly easy prey to him, and each time the swindler's trap was sprung the unfortunate victim lost at least a small fortune. It cost Daniel C. Curry, former comptroller of the city of Winnipeg, just \$64,000 for allowing the benevolent man of leisure whom he met at French Lick Springs to "let him in on the ground floor" of a scheme to build a New York pool room out of a cool half million.

Forty-three thousand dollars was the price Arnold Z. Swantine, a well-known Ohio physician, paid for believing what a chance acquaintance on the 20th Century Limited, who displayed letters of introduction from two of Cleveland's leading bankers, had to say about a mythical consumptive engineer and his mine.

Orlo Bennett and J. S. Nutley, of Portland, Oregon, were firmly convinced that a certain distinguished elderly gentleman was the authorized agent of a Spanish convict who needed financial aid to recover \$300,000 worth of buried treasure. Before they finished dining with him one night in his luxurious suite at the Waldorf-Astoria they handed him certified checks for \$37,000. Needless to say they never saw their genial host again and they have only the memory of a delicious dinner to show for their lifetime savings.

Experiences like these show what everybody with a little money will have to guard against more than ever now that Gondorf is free again. The total stealings of the band of swindling experts of which he was (and possibly still is) the brains and leader run high into the millions. During the year 1912 alone the New York police estimated that gullible men and

women contributed to the swollen coffers these swindlers more than \$750,000.

The annals of crime can show no other career so spectacular and so extraordinary in every way as that of Charles Gondorf, the acknowledged King of Confidence Men. Although engaged in the boldest dishonesty for more than twenty years and for most of that time a marked man to the police of a half dozen countries, he led until recently a charmed life so far as punishment for his innumerable crimes was concerned. The short term he completed at Sing Sing the other day was the first he ever served in prison.

Such a record is all the more remarkable in view of the number of his victims, their social prominence and the large sums of which he robbed them.

It is more than mere luck that has enabled Gondorf to escape the law's clutches time and again. It is also more than the ability to employ the best of legal talent that has enabled him to keep on piling up his ill-gotten gains while other criminals far less to be dreaded by society were being sent to prison for long terms.

If the underworld can be said to have its aristocrats, Gondorf is one of them. So far as present day crime is concerned he is perhaps the only man whose exploits entitle him to a place in the "400."

We have now and then a gentleman burglar or a gentleman pickpocket, but he is a man who assumes the garb and manners of fashionable society only for the brief interval necessary to accomplish his dishonest purpose. At other times we find him living in a tenement, eating at cheap restaurants and wearing soiled linen and shabby clothes.

But Gondorf is always the gentleman, the thoroughbred man of the world, dressed in exquisite taste and revealing in his every word and action all the earmarks of wealth, education and good breeding. Whether putting the finishing touches to some gigantic swindle or quietly lying in wait for his next victim, he is never out of harmony with what we are accustomed to find in the very bluest blooded social circles.

In this fact lies the reason for this Confidence King's success not only in duping wealthy men, but in making it so difficult for the authorities to get enough evidence to convict him.

Although born the son of a poor cobbler, Gondorf was not long in shaking off all signs of his humble origin. Nature had given him a good physique, a pleasing voice and eye, the sort of personality that

women call "charming" and men "strong." Keen observation, a marvellous memory and a faculty for imitation that would have made him a great actor did the rest.

Gondorf is a man who can rub shoulders with millionaires in fashionable clubs and Fifth avenue drawing-rooms and never excite anything but approving glances. In fact, it has usually been in places like these that he makes the acquaintances of his victims, and there in many instances he actually lays hand on the certified checks or fat rolls of crisp banknotes for which he has been plotting for weeks.

So entrancing is Gondorf's personality and so brilliant his powers as a conversationalist on all sorts of topics that the regret of some of his victims over their financial losses is actually tempered by pleasant memories of the hours they passed with him while they were being led toward his trap.

"It's shameful the way he swindled me," said a Boston banker who helped swell the confidence man's fortune by nearly \$100,000, "but I certainly did enjoy knowing him. He gave me some ideas that have been of wonderful help to me in my particular hobby, the collection of old books."

Another thing that makes Gondorf a man to be dreaded is the astonishing originality of his methods. In crime, as in other things, there is no longer anything really new under the sun, but Gondorf knows how to give such an alluring twist to old swindles that he has been able to deceive even the most worldly wise.

One of the time-honored swindles into which Gondorf introduced so many variations that it worked even better than when brand new is what is known as the wire-tapping game. A good example of the way it was played over and over again is furnished by the experience of Major Edward G. Pendleton, a wealthy Southerner.

The Major has palatial homes in Savannah, Atlantic City and Palm Beach. It was at the latter that Jean H. E. Saint-Cyr, the young New York man-about-town, wooed and won the millionaire widow of "Silent" Smith. Both Mr. and Mrs. Saint-Cyr have long been friends of the Major.

Like so many other wealthy men, Major Pendleton spends a great deal of time in New York. His is a very familiar figure in the Fifth avenue clubs and at the Waldorf-Astoria and other fashionable hotels.

A university-trained, widely travelled man of the world, Major Pendleton is the last man any ordinary swindler would select as a likely victim. But Gondorf seems to have marked him for a good

race could be ascertained some little time before the information reached the pool rooms.

Major Pendleton was interested right away. It looked like a fine chance to make a good deal of easy money. To clinch matters, Halle took the Major down to the Western Union building in his limousine. There he summoned from a room on an upper floor, where hundreds of telegraph keys were clicking a shirt-sleeved man, who was introduced as the operator in charge of the racing wire.

That was enough for the Major. The next day he made his first bet—\$5,000 at odds of 3 to 1 on a horse named, curiously enough, Never Again. Of course, Never Again won, and Major Pendleton, with a heart full of gratitude to his friend Halle, pocketed \$10,000.

Then he was urged to plunge more heavily and make a "killing." This time he put up \$25,000, but something went wrong, and he lost.

Still believing implicitly all the swindlers were telling him, the Major next day made another bet of \$40,000 to get even. This was lost through an unfortunate error of the betting commissioner, so he was told.

This was a little too much for even the gullible Major to swallow. He hurried to Police Headquarters and told his troubles to Deputy Commissioner Dougherty. But by the time the detectives got into action Gondorf, Halle, and even the shirt-sleeved Western Union operator had vanished.

The facts in the matter came months later when Major Pendleton brought suit in the courts of New Jersey to recover from Gondorf the \$55,000 which he had lost in the short space of three days.

Another important factor in the success of this master criminal is the keenness of his knowledge of human nature. The weaknesses of his fellow men are his main reliance, and no one understands better than he how to find out what they are. Once this knowledge is obtained, it is a very simple matter for Gondorf to set a trap with bait that cannot fail to tempt.

It was Major Pendleton's itching for easy money on which Gondorf and his associates played when they unfolded their plan to beat the poolrooms.

prospect from the moment they met in the library of one of New York's most exclusive clubs.

As the acquaintance ripened the Major and Gondorf met frequently at the club and also at the Waldorf-Astoria, where they both were guests. Presently various confederates of Gondorf, posing as retired manufacturers, wealthy mine owners, etc., were introduced. The Major found them even more enjoyable companions than Gondorf, particularly a portly middle-aged man who called himself Atwell J. Halle.

It was Halle whose task was to acquaint the Major with the details of the plan to make a few hundred thousand dollars at the expense of the pool rooms. Once the victim's interest was aroused Gondorf began to recede into the background. This, it should be said, is Gondorf's usual custom. After picking out the victim and winning his confidence he likes to eliminate himself and leave to other trusted and carefully trained members of his staff the culmination of the swindle.

According to the story Halle told the Major, the former had a friend who had charge of one of the Western Union racing wires. By telephoning this friend the winning horse in any given



Mr. Gondorf,  
a Real-Life  
Master Criminal.

gently hinted to him that perhaps he might be able to escape the disgrace of a night in a cell and arraignment in court on a charge of murder by a liberal cash payment.

The terrified victim grasps eagerly at this straw and turns over to his captors a sum that has on some occasions run as high as \$100,000.

There is no form of swindle at which Gondorf is not adept. But whatever the scheme of fleecing his fellow men it is invariably one involving big money and one that can be carried out in a setting of luxury with diamonds sparkling, champagne corks popping and all the actors wearing silk hats and fur-lined overcoats.

It may be that this master criminal's few years in prison for complicity in a wire-tapping swindle have led him to decide to turn his really brilliant talents to some honest use. On the other hand, it may be that he has spent his years of confinement devising new and more ingenious means of luring the dollars out of other men's pockets.

But whatever the truth of the matter, it won't do a bit of harm to be more wary than ever now that Gondorf is out.

In the case of William F. Walker, the unfortunate Connecticut bank cashier, it was the fear of exposure for past thefts that enabled Gondorf to induce the man to steal hundreds of thousands of dollars more from his employers.

Fear of disgrace in the eyes of one's family and friends is another motive which the astute Gondorf has often turned to his advantage. It is always particularly useful in the case of strangers in New York.

The stranger is lured to a fake poolroom in a fashionable hotel or a Broadway office building. There he sees a group of "millionaires" making bets of \$10,000 or \$20,000 with a nonchalance that takes his breath away.

Suddenly the door opens and a half dozen stern-faced men rush in. "The place is pinched!" some one cries. The supposed detectives arrest the poolroom operators and also the poor stranger in New York, declaring that he bears a striking resemblance to a man wanted for murder.

On the way to the station house it is